

# MODERN SUBJECTS TAUGHT

## Dr. MacCracken Explains Objects of New York University and College Methods of To-day.

By JAMES B. MORROW.

Special Correspondence The Washington Herald.

New York, Aug. 20.—Tell men, angular and bearded, the MacCrackens, tribal warriors in Scotland, when fighting was the world's principal occupation and enjoyment, emigrated to America and became pioneers and farmers.

Three generations back two MacCrackens, young men and brothers, sat on a line fence in an Ohio forest, and, after slowly and gravely talking the matter inside out, determined to be preachers. The MacCrackens, now a family and not a clan, have been teaching ever since. Preaching is teaching, and an ecclesiastical might be called a pedagogic to the spirit.

After following Abraham Lincoln around while he tried several law suits and a case of murder, Henry Mitchell MacCracken, son of one of the axmen on the fence, returned to his home near and north of Cincinnati to study law, as he supposed, but, as a matter of fact, to be a schoolmaster. In his second place of employment, a little town of English brick houses among the fields, he followed Whitelaw Reid, who, finding his talent, had gone away to learn journalism.

There was preaching afterward, but the MacCracken gift for teaching was too precise and managerial for the pulpit. Also, there is a more ready response from a class, eager to acquire, than from a congregation, settled in its convictions. A steaming man wants to be doing something. So Henry M. MacCracken, doctor of divinity, pastor in a city, hurried along into the chancellorship of New York University. He has been here for twenty-six years, first subalternately and as a professor of philosophy, but since 1881 the inspirational and governing head of one of the most important educational enterprises in the United States.

### Builds an Institution.

Meanwhile, his influence has been manifest throughout the whole country. He found an obscure institution, meanly housed, and physical property worth \$500,000. There were ninety college students. To-day 4,300 young men and women are studying at the university. Beautiful buildings have been erected on the heights at the northern edge of the city. Property has been obtained to the value of \$5,000,000. The Scotch aptitude for general business and the driving of a particular bargain is not lacking in the MacCrackens. The two youths on the line fence in the woods once made a trade in land that has since been praised by all their descendants.

Educationally, the progress of New York University has kept up with its material success. A teacher himself and nothing else, Dr. MacCracken established a department of pedagogy, the first anywhere of which there is a record. Later he opened a professional school of commerce, accounts, and financing. He has lived through and taken part in the modern evolution of educational methods, and is conspicuous among the group of great living teachers. Indeed, he and Charles W. Eliot are the grandest old schoolmasters in America.

### Three Score and Ten.

Likewise, Chancellor MacCracken is a human being. He is lively, imaginative, and cordial in his conversation. An inch more than six feet tall, with a large nose of unusual width at the bridge, brown eyes that can twinkle with humor, and a short, white beard, he acts and looks like an amiable and muscular philosopher. He will be seventy years old on the 25th day of next September, and will then have served half a century as a public instructor.

Last February he resigned his office with the university, agreeing to remain at his post, however, until the morning of his coming birthday. The trustees objected in a running debate that lasted two months, and then reluctantly consented to defer to his wishes. He pleaded age, but they laughed at his years, as well they might. In the autumn he will set out upon a tour of the world, accompanied by his wife, and will investigate the remarkable educational development of Korea, China, and Japan.

"Are there any chances nowadays?" I asked him, "for the boy who has not gone to college?"

"Plenty of them," Chancellor MacCracken replied. "It is not expected that every boy shall have a college education. It is found in the grammar schools, for instance, that certain pupils become tired of their books and long to go away and work with things or among men. They would only be harmed if they remained, and consequently they should be permitted to drop out. The natural process of elimination, which is the law of the survival of the fittest, goes on in our high schools, the classes growing smaller as they near the end of the regular course.

### Leaves School for Business.

"Not all of the freshmen in college last. They have come through the high schools or preparatory schools, finding little difficulty with lower algebra or geometry, but when they reach the differential calculus and the higher mathematics they lose interest in their work and want to escape. It is well to let them go. They will get no good where they are, especially if they loaf. From the grammar school onward, therefore, boys are vanishing into trades and business, to become bankers, merchants, railway managers, manufacturers, mechanics, and inventors. Likewise to get rich."

"Are college standards higher than they were formerly?"

"Oh, yes. It takes two years longer to get ready for college than was the case when I was a boy. If a student, in my youth, made some pretense of industry and kept out of mischief, he was usually excused for his deficiencies in scholarship. That slipshod era has passed away. Students now are absolutely compelled to work and obtain results or make room for some one else. The greatest changes, however, have occurred in our university schools in which men are prepared for professions."

"Remember very well when a student, without even so much as a high school education, could qualify for a degree in medicine, and after attending a medical college for two winters, or twelve months altogether, be licensed to practice. Now a prospective physician, in New York at least, must have taken a full high school course, and is then compelled to spend four years, of nine months each, at a college of medicine. The requirements in law also have been increased, and many new professions, demanding the hardest kind of labor in the way of preparation, have come into existence."

"Have the moral character and personal conduct of students improved or deteriorated?"

"Student life in this country is more

wholesome than ever before. There is not so much drinking, or profanity, or vulgarity of speech as there was when I attended college in a little rural town of Ohio fifty years ago. One of the students in my senior class was expelled for having committed a murder, another—and he was a relative of a President of the United States—was sent away because of a sensational debauch, and still another brought scandal to the community by engaging in a terribly bloody fight. There is no such conduct now at our American colleges.

"A large part of our students live in New York and are supposed to know of some of the evils that abound in large cities, but they are serious and right-living young men and their conduct gives us no cause to complain. Oxford, where I was educated, you must remember, was a country village. We are living in a

shoulders. They staked off several square miles of forests and meadows. So far as I know, Judge Burnett never complained that the MacCrackens got the better of him. The land was handed down in the family. I sold the last of mine about ten years ago.

"After I had grown into manhood I was shown the line fence on which my father and uncle once sat, talking moderately in Scotch fashion and saying at the end of the conference: 'We have worked hard, and now we shall go to Miami University and prepare ourselves for the ministry.' Both were graduated by my uncle becoming a member of the faculty. While my father was studying theology he met my mother, then the widow of a college president and the owner of a successful school for young ladies. I was born at Oxford. My father prepared me for Miami University, from

up and tiptoe out of the church. He was followed by other men, until there was a pretty large hole in the congregation. I know exactly what was happening. Presently all the men came back, and I saw them put their heads on the pews in front of them and go to praying, and I felt like stopping to offer a prayer myself.

### Pray for Victory.

"You see, the Battle of Shiloh had been fought on Sunday and Monday. Grant was surprised on Sunday and driven back. On Monday he charged the Confederates, and plucked victory from disaster. The whistle of the locomotive told my congregation that the Cincinnati daily papers were coming to town with the news of the battle, and one of them would contain a dispatch from Whitelaw Reid, who was with Grant's army, and who was known thereabouts and highly respected. So when the men returned and began to pray, I understood that all had gone well with the Union forces. Still, excited as I ought to have been, I repeated my sermon, word for word, just as it had been written."

"Your first pastorate was in Columbus, 'State capital'—

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### A Republican Prayer.

"It was my turn to pray in the house of representatives the morning after election. My prayer, 300 words in length, was called a d— black Republican speech by one of the Democratic members. William Henry Smith, later in life the general manager of the Associated Press, was then secretary of state in Ohio and telegraphed the prayer to many of the largest newspapers in the United States.

"I was acquainted with Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury; with John and William T. Sherman; with Rutherford B. Hayes, for whose mother I preached a funeral sermon. Four years after I became a parson, I took my sister to Europe for her health. I had letters from Secretary Chase and other distinguished men, on the strength of which I was asked to be a delegate in the general assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which met in Glasgow. Henry M. Field, an eminent clergyman, and brother of Cyrus W. Field, who laid the first cable connecting America with Europe, was the regular delegate from this country. I was nobody. Field was introduced as a new school Presbyterian, and got an icy welcome. I was said to be a representative of the old kind of Presbyterians, and was loudly cheered by the delegates.

"The great question which the ministers in the United States had to face," Dr. Field said in his speech, "a question now settled, happily, for all time in the future, concerned slavery." Field, a particular man, gave his manuscript to the newspapers, and all of them turned the word 'slavery' into 'salarly.' He was so outraged that he put his address into a pamphlet at his own expense, and circulated it all over Great Britain.

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### Water the Plants.

If the season is a dry one some of the plants in the garden will have to be watered if you want flowers from them. This is especially true of the dahlias. Use enough water to penetrate all the soil in which their roots grow, and see that it is kept moist. Watering to-day and neglecting for a week to come isn't the proper thing. Save the suds from washing for such use.

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